

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1           1.       A method for configuring a product that is associated with a number of  
2 configurable features, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with  
3 a supplier of the product over the Internet during the configuration, the method  
4 comprising:

5           receiving from the supplier an availability date that corresponds to a feature of the  
6           product selected by the customer; and  
7           updating an in-process bill of materials to reflect that selected feature.

1           2.       The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2           repeating the steps of receiving and updating a number of times until the  
3           configuration is complete thereby yielding a completed bill of materials.

1           3.       The method of claim 1, wherein the step of receiving from the supplier an  
2           availability date is preceded by the step of:  
3           communicating the selected feature to the supplier.

1           4.       The method of claim 1, the method further comprising:  
2           in response to the received availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer,  
3           communicating a customer specified availability date to the supplier.

1           5.       The method of claim 1, wherein the availability date received from the  
2           supplier is in response to a customer specified availability date communicated to the  
3           supplier.

1           6.       The method of claim 1, wherein the availability date received from the  
2           supplier is in response to a customer specified price communicated to the supplier.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 deriving, from the in-process bill of materials, an in-process manufacturing bill of  
3 materials that reflects the received availability date that corresponds to the  
4 selected feature.

1 8. The method of claim 1, the method further comprising:  
2 receiving a price that corresponds to the selected feature.

1 9. The method of claim 8, the method further comprising:  
2 in response to the received price being unsatisfactory to the customer,  
3 communicating a customer specified price to the supplier.

1 10. The method of claim 8, wherein the price received from the supplier is in  
2 response to a customer specified availability date communicated to the supplier.

1 11. The method of claim 8, wherein the price received from the supplier is in  
2 response to a customer specified price communicated to the supplier.

1 12. The method of claim 8, wherein a relationship between the customer and  
2 the supplier has a configuration side associated with the customer, and a resource  
3 planning side associated with the supplier, and that configuration side-resource planning  
4 side relationship is respectively one of a consumer-seller relationship, a seller-  
5 manufacturer relationship and a manufacturer-vendor relationship.

1 13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:  
2 in response to the price of the selected feature being determined on the  
3 configuration side, deriving an in-process pricing bill of materials from the  
4 in-process bill of materials, wherein the in-process pricing bill of materials  
5 reflects the price of the selected feature; and  
6 in response to the price of the selected feature being determined on the resource  
7 planning side, deriving the in-process pricing bill of materials from an in-

process manufacturing bill of materials that is derived from the in-process bill of materials and reflects the received availability date of the selected feature.

14. A system for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein the system allows a customer to interact with a supplier of the product over the Internet during the configuration, the system comprising:

a configuration application for receiving a product feature selected by the customer, and for validating a number of constraints associated with that product feature;

a communication module coupled to the configuration application for communicating the selected product feature to the supplier, and for communicating an availability date of that product feature from the supplier to the configuration application; and

a first storage area coupled to one of the configuration application and the communication module for storing an in-process bill of materials that reflects the product feature selected by the user.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein after the customer has completed the configuration, the in-process bill of materials represents a completed bill of materials.

16. The system of claim 14, wherein in response to the availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer, the communication module communicates a customer specified availability date to the supplier.

17. The system of claim 14, wherein the availability date is in response to a customer specified availability date communicated to the supplier by the communication module.

18. The system of claim 14, wherein the availability date is in response to a customer specified price communicated to the supplier by the communication module.

1 19. The system of claim 14, wherein an in-process manufacturing bill of  
2 materials is derived from the in-process bill of materials, and reflects the availability date  
3 of the selected product feature.

1 20. The system of claim 14, further comprising:  
2 a second storage area coupled to one of the configuration application and the  
3 communication module for storing an in-process manufacturing bill of  
4 materials that reflects the availability date of the selected product feature;  
5 and  
6 a third storage area coupled to one of the configuration application and the  
7 communication module for storing an in-process pricing bill of materials  
8 that reflects a price of the selected product feature.

1 21. The system of claim 14, wherein the communication module is also for  
2 communicating a price of the selected product feature from the supplier to the  
3 configuration application.

1 22. The system of claim 21, wherein the communication module comprises:  
2 an availability date communication module for communicating the availability  
3 date of the selected product feature from the supplier to the configuration  
4 application; and  
5 a price communication module for communicating the price of the selected  
6 product feature to the configuration application.

1 23. The system of claim 14, wherein a relationship between the customer and  
2 the supplier has a configuration side associated with the customer, and a resource  
3 planning side associated with the supplier, and that configuration side-resource planning  
4 side relationship is respectively one of a consumer-seller relationship, a seller-  
5 manufacturer relationship and a manufacturer-vendor relationship.

1 24. The system of claim 23, wherein:

2 in response to the price of the selected product feature being determined on the  
3 configuration side, an in-process pricing bill of materials is derived from  
4 the in-process bill of materials, wherein the in-process pricing bill of  
5 materials reflects the price of the selected feature; and

6 in response to the price of the selected product feature being determined on the  
7 resource planning side, the in-process pricing bill of materials is derived  
8 from an in-process manufacturing bill of materials that is derived from the  
9 in-process bill of materials and reflects the received availability date of the  
10 selected feature.

1 25. The system of claim 14, further comprising:

2 a user interface coupled to the configuration application for allowing the user to  
3 interact with the system.

1 26. The system of claim 14, further comprising:

2 an inventory library coupled to the configuration application for providing the  
3 customer a number of product features that can be selected to configure  
4 the product.

1 27. A method for configuring a product that is associated with a number of  
2 configurable features, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with  
3 a supplier of the product over the Internet during the configuration, the method  
4 comprising:

5 communicating a customer selected product feature to the supplier;

6 receiving from the supplier an availability date that corresponds to that selected  
7 product feature;

8 in response to the availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer,

9 communicating a customer specified availability date to the supplier; and

10 receiving from the supplier an accommodation based on the customer specified  
11 availability date.

1 28. The method of claim 27, further comprising:

2 updating a bill of materials to reflect the accommodation received from the  
3 supplier.

1 29. The method of claim 27, wherein the accommodation is one of an  
2 availability date that satisfies the customer specified availability date, and a reduced price.

1 30. A process for configuring a product that is associated with a number of  
2 configurable features, wherein the customer dynamically interacts with a supplier of the  
3 product over the Internet in order to define a set of sales parameters that includes an  
4 availability date of at least one of the configurable features, the method comprising:  
5 responsive to the customer selecting a feature of the product, receiving from the  
6 supplier an availability date that corresponds to that selected feature;  
7 updating an in-process bill of materials to reflect that selected feature; and  
8 in response to the customer being satisfied with the sales parameters, submitting a  
9 completed bill of materials to the supplier.

1 31. A computer program product, stored on a computer readable medium, for  
2 configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein  
3 in response to the computer program product being executed by a processor, the processor  
4 performs the steps of:

5 receiving from a supplier over the Internet an availability date that corresponds to  
6 a product feature selected by a customer;  
7 in response to the availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer,  
8 communicating over the Internet a customer specified availability date to  
9 the supplier; and  
10 receiving from the supplier over the Internet an accommodation based on the  
11 customer specified availability date.

1 32. The computer program product of claim 31, further comprising:

2 updating a bill of materials to reflect the accommodation received from the  
3 supplier.

1 33. A computer program product, stored on a computer readable medium, for  
2 configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein  
3 in response to the computer program product being executed by a processor, the processor  
4 performs the steps of:

5 responsive to a customer selecting a feature of the product, receiving from a  
6 supplier over the Internet an availability date that corresponds to that  
7 selected feature;

8 updating an in-process bill of materials to reflect that selected feature; and  
9 in response to the customer being satisfied with a set of sales parameters including  
10 the availability date of the selected feature, submitting a completed bill of  
11 materials to the supplier over the Internet.

12 34. A system for configuring a product that is associated with a number of  
13 configurable features, wherein the system allows a customer to interact with a supplier of  
the product over the Internet during the configuration, the system comprising:

1 a configuration application means for receiving a product feature selected by the  
2 customer, and for validating a number of constraints associated with that  
3 product feature;

4 a communication module means coupled to the configuration application means  
5 for communicating the selected product feature to the supplier, and for  
6 communicating an availability date of that product feature from the  
7 supplier to the configuration application means; and

8 a first storage area means coupled to one of the configuration application means  
9 and the communication module means for storing an in-process bill of  
10 materials that reflects the product feature selected by the user.